BACK-GROUND PAPERS

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR, 1975

The achievement of equal rights for men and women, both in law and in fac', has long been a goal of the United Nations. This goal is proclaimed in the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and in a number of international legal agreements. In their expanding work on behalf of women, United Nations bodies have stressed not only the rights of women as individuals but also the need to use their talents and abilities for the progress of society.

The year 19'5 has been proclaimed International Women's Year by the Gene'al Assembly. The Assembly called for intensified action during the Year to promote equality, full integration of women in deveopment efforts, and recognition of their role in strengthening world peace. Theme of the Year is "Equality, Development and Peace". The major event of the Year will be the United Nations-sponsored Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City (19 June–2 July), bringing together government representatives and others from all parts of the world. It will be the first world intergovernmental conference on women ever held.

International Women's Year is envisaged as part of a sustained long-term effort of the international community to improve the condition of women and their contribution to society. It is hoped that the Year will have an impact on men and women everywhere, and that it will stimulate new initiatives and dynamic action programmes on the national, regional and international levels.

On 16 May 1974 the Economic and Social Council approved the Programme for International Women's Year, 1975, which was drafted by the Commission on the Status of Women. The Programme sets forth measures and activities to be undertaken by Member States, the organizations within the United Nations system, and international and non-governmental organizations.

In resolution 3275 (XXIX) of 10 December 1974, the General Assembly called for full implementation of the Programme. It also recommended that all Member States include, in their national development plans and programmes, goals and projects to train and equip women to make a greater contribution to economic and social life, and establish "appropriate national machinery to accelerate the integration of women in development and to eliminate discrimination on grounds of sex".

Following is the full text of the Programme for International Women's Year, 1975:

PROGRAMME FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR, 1975

"Considering that discrimination against women is incompatible with human dignity and with the welfare of the family and of society, prevents their participation, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries and is an obstacle to the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity.

"Convinced that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world, and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women as well as men in all fields."

[Preamble to the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 7 November 1967]

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE YEAR

1. International Women's Year, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1972 is to be devoted to *intensified action*:

(*a*) To promote equality between men and women;

(*b*) To ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort, especially by emphasizing women's responsibility and important role in economic, social and cultural development at the national, regional and international levels, particularly during the Second United Nations Development Decade;

(c) To increase the contribution of women to the development of friendly relations and co-operation among States and to the strengthening of world peace.

2. The central theme therefore is:

EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

3. The Year should be a time to review and evaluate progress made in these three areas since the United Nations Charter established the basic goals in 1945. It should also stimulate new initiatives and develop or set in motion dynamic national, regional and international action programmes.

4. Widespread publicity and promotional efforts are needed, along with substantive activities designed to have a continuing impact in the years ahead, as part of a sustained long-term effort of the international community to improve the condition of women and their contribution to society.

5. The Year should demonstrate the value of a unified approach to issues of human rights, development and peace which cannot be successfully dealt with as isolated questions distinct from each other. It should be viewed as an event in which both men and women will participate.

6. At the same time, the activities and programmes should find an echo among men and women from urban and rural areas, from all walks of life, in all countries, and stimulate their imagination and creativity. As a large number of activities will be organized and carried out in connexion with the Year, appropriate governmental and non-governmental authorities should be requested to make adequate budgetary allocations.

II. OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

7. The many declarations, conventions and other recommendations adopted by the United Nations and the specialized agencies have established international goals and objectives, all of which *provide guidance for the elaboration* of national, regional and international programmes for the observance of International Women's Year; among them the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, the International Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)) and the programme of concerted international action for the advancement of women (General Assembly resolution 2716 (XXV)). The specific objectives set forth below are based on these and other instruments and should be especially emphasized in the programmes and activities undertaken in observance of the Year.

8. Programmes and activities should be directed, as part of the total development effort, in particular towards:

A. EQUALITY

(a) Achieving full *equality before the law* in all fields where it does not yet exist;

(b) Meeting the *health* needs of girls and women equally with those of boys and men, which should be recognized as a prerequisite to the promotion of equality between them and to the full participation of both in the development effort;

(c) Promoting *equality of economic rights*, including the right to work and the right to equal pay for work of equal value, non-discrimination in employment opportunities, governmental as well as private, and security of employment after marriage;

(d) Promoting *equality of rights and responsibilities in the family* and home and creating awareness and recognition that men and women have equal rights and obligations towards themselves as individuals, towards their children as parents, and towards their societies as citizens;

(e) Ensuring that women as well as men participate fully and as equal partners in policy formulation and *decision-making* at the local, national and international levels, including development planning, educational programming and questions of foreign policy such as disarmament and the strengthening of friendly relations among States.

B. DEVELOPMENT

(*f*) Improving the *awareness* of women in the *developed* countries through effective information and education, of the living conditions and problems of women in the *developing* areas in order to intensify the contribution of the former to international development co-operation;

(*g*) Improving the *living and working conditions* as well as the status of both men and women throughout the community and expanding freedom of choice for all persons in planning life patterns that permit the development of their potential as individuals;

(*h*) Improving the quality of *rural life* through the provision of cultural, educational and employment opportunities in the rural areas;

(*i*) Improving the condition of rural women on an equal basis with men especially as regards *training in co-operatives*, modern agricultural and technical methods, vocational training, the use of modern labour-saving devices in homes and modern methods of child-rearing;

(*j*) Eliminating illiteracy and ensuring *equality of educational opportunities* at all levels (including vocational training) and the same choice of curricula for male and female students, preferably in the same schools for boys and girls;

(*k*) Actively encouraging women to train for and enter non-traditional occupations, providing proper *guidance* and *counselling* and expanding co-operative programmes among women of different countries that would contribute to international understanding through shared endeavours;

(*l*) Providing *training* (including in-service training) for women in all fields, including citizenship and leadership, consumerism, management, and science and technology, keeping in mind the concomitant need to help find employment opportunities for women who complete the training period;

(*m*) Providing *social services* (including health, family planning, child care, social and community services) and farm and home extension services;

(*n*) Developing and extending a network of health services for the protection of *maternity* and of the health of the mother and child;

(*o*) Seeking to improve the situation of women in *prisons and other places of detention*;

(*p*) Recognizing the value, for the country's over-all development and advancement, of the untapped resources of women to contribute to the national culture, development and spiritual values through their work in voluntary activities as well as in the labour market and home management;

(*q*) Combating exploitation of women and girls through illicit and clandestine trafficking;

C. PEACE

(*r*) Promoting the peace efforts of women's groups and other national and international organizations and encouraging on the part of all women of the world, the promotion of *détente* in the world, international peace and co-operation among States, through contributions to such measures as:

(i) Combating colonialism, neo-colonialism, foreign domination and alien subjugation, *apartheid* and racial discrimination;

(ii) The realization of the principle of the right of people to self-determination;

(iii) Dissemination of information concerning the United Nations Charter and activities as well as the principle of international law;

(*s*) Combating racism and racial discrimination whenever and wherever it manifests itself, and lending support to the victims of racism, *apartheid* and colonialism as well as supporting women and children in armed struggle including the struggle for independence and self-determination;

(*t*) Participation of women in safeguarding peace which would promote economic, social, cultural and political conditions that contribute to the advancement of the status of women and men;

(*u*) Developing and implementing international standards and other actions to encourage peaceful relations among States on the basis of the principles of the United Nations Charter, relevant United Nations resolutions as well as international law;

(*v*) Facilitating the free flow of information and ideas among countries having due regard for their sovereignty and non-intervention in their domestic affairs, on the contribution of women as well as men to peace and to the promotion of friendly relations among States and to peace, and promoting the exchange of visits by women of different countries to study common problems;

III. ACTIVITIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

A. *Special acts of commemoration*

9. An inaugural statement might launch this International Year. In order to emphasize the importance of the Year, it should be proclaimed in each State,

(*a*) By the highest official authority;

(*b*) By appropriate local officials;

(*c*) By men and women leaders in all fields.

B. *National programmes; targets and priorities*

10. Specific targets should be established to be achieved by 1980 and 1985 for the attainment of the objectives of the Year set forth above (for this purpose the Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade and the objectives and targets set forth in the programme of concerted international action for the advancement of women should also be studied) (General Assembly resolutions 2626 (XXV) of 19 November 1970, and 2716 (XXV) of 15 December 1970):

(a) *Machinery and procedures* should be set up for the continuous *review and evaluation* of women's integration into all sectors of economic and social life at all levels;

(b) *Short-term and long-term programmes* and priorities should be adopted with adequately funded programmes to achieve the targets and to improve the condition of women and ensure their integration in the total development effort.

In particular it is recommended that each country should adopt at least one long-term constructive programme based on section B "Development" of part II "Objectives and goals", above.

11. Nation-wide initiatives from non-governmental groups (e.g. organizations in business, industry and civic life, professional organizations, labour unions, educational institutions, student associations, mass communication media etc.) should be enlisted in order, for example:

(a) To help to bring progress in the area of women's rights and responsibilities;

(b) To increase participation in and support for the national and international women's movements;

(c) To work towards promoting a full partnership between men and women.

C. *National commissions or similar bodies*

12. A national commission, or similar body, if it does not already exist, could be established (and, where appropriate, local commissions or committees) with a mandate to review, evaluate and recommend measures and priorities to ensure equality between men and women and the full integration of women in all sectors of national life. Wherever possible such bodies should be composed of both men and women and include governmental and non-governmental representatives.

13. Under the commission, or similar body, sub-commissions or working groups could undertake fact-finding and comprehensive studies, paying special attention to the needs and problems of women in both rural and urban areas.

D. *Special counselling offices*

14. A network of special counselling offices could be established to advise women about their rights and obligations and their participation in development, with competence also to deal with complaints regarding infringements of women's rights and to make legal aid available when required.

E. *Publicity and educational measures*

15. Programmes of publicity and promotion should be conducted in both urban and rural areas, emphasizing the three

objectives of the Year and the particular constructive programme adopted by such means as:

(a) Pamphlets, posters and paid advertising;

(b) Commemorative postage stamps, calendars, first-day covers and cancellations;

(c) Commemorative publications;

(d) Spot statements on radio and television;

(e) Revised textbooks replacing traditional stereotyped images of men and women by new concepts;

(f) Radio and television talks and forums, including those focusing on the activities of women from all walks of life, whether or not they have achieved prominence;

(g) Free time for United Nations programmes on national radio and television networks;

(h) Films and film festivals;

(i) Exhibitions featuring artistic and cultural works, especially by women;

(j) Organization of contests (e.g., essay and speech contests, painting and poster contests, quiz programmes and public debates);

(k) Awards honouring achievements by women in specific fields;

(l) Awards honouring outstanding contributions of women and men to the threefold objectives of the Year;

(m) Sports events and competitions;

(n) Mass distribution in national and local languages to schools and the general public of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and other related international instruments.

16. Schools, colleges and universities should be encouraged to establish programmes for teaching and research in questions related to the promotion of equality of men and women and the elimination of discrimination and prejudice against women and the contributions of women to society should be stressed.

17. Material (including audio-visual material) should be prepared dealing with women's rights, responsibilities and the causes of prejudice and discrimination against women, and ways of overcoming it, for use by:

(*a*) Students and teachers in primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. (Students might be encouraged to study the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in relation to local customs, traditions and practices, and to consider its application to them in their everyday lives.);

(*b*) Employers, workers and trade unionists;

(*c*) Community groups and voluntary organizations.

18. Attention should be given to the establishment where it is considered to be appropriate, of women's history centres, which would gather and make available records of the development of the status of women on a national and international basis and would preserve the papers and other records relating to this subject.

19. Educational programmes should be developed to inform women of their legal rights and of the means available for securing their enforcement.

20. Programmes should be developed to aid the upward mobility of women through education, to provide counselling and guidance on educational and employment opportunities geared particularly to women who plan to resume their education or job-training after an absence of years from active participation; and to expand retraining programmes for women who wish to re-enter the labour force.

21. Other programmes should be developed to:

(*a*) Promote equal participation of women and men in the labour union movement and the access to positions of leadership for women within the unions;

(*b*) Provide seminars and workshops to prepare women for participation in politics at local, state, national and international levels;

(*c*) Offer executive leadership and management training opportunities for women.

F. *Studies and surveys*

22. Studies and surveys are needed on all aspects of the status of women, both in law and in practice and on the changing roles of men and women in society and in the family. Suggested fields of study appear in appendix I of the programme.

23. The following broad areas merit special attention:

(*a*) Inquiries into customs, traditions, practices and attitudes which impede or promote the exercise of equal rights of men and women, and which constrain or increase women's contribution to development;

(*b*) The assessment and evaluation of women's current and potential contribution to the various sectors in relation to the country's over-all development plans and programmes;

(*c*) The interrelationship of the condition of women, population change, and over-all development;

(*d*) Extent of women's participation in the labour force and their position within it and in trade union organizations. Special attention should also be given to the agricultural and service sectors of the economy and the question of co-operatives;

(*e*) Influence of scientific and technological developments on the position of women and their integration in the development effort.

G. *National conferences and other meetings*

24. National governmental and non-governmental conferences, seminars, training courses and other types of meetings should be convened during the Year to discuss the attainment of the three main objectives or particular aspects of these objectives and establish short-term and long-term programmes. Governments should place a greater number of qualified women on national delegations to international conferences, United Nations sessions and meetings, and other international meetings dealing with problems of major national concern; and the Secretary-General should remind Governments of the need for steadily increasing such participation by women.

H. *Exchange programmes*

25. Exchange programmes (e.g., visits, fellowships, lecture tours and discussion groups) for both men and women should be organized to study common problems, in particular, the number

of scholarships granted to women and girls should be increased in 1975 and women should be appointed in greater number to delegations to seminars, congresses etc., at both the international and the national levels.

26. The activities of women's organizations for improving the condition of life and future prospects for women and for contributing to the development of friendly relations and co-operation among nations and peace should be developed and strengthened by increasing co-operation and exchange between them, and giving their efforts and achievements wider publicity and support by Governments and the general public.

1. *Ratification and implementation of international instruments*

27. Every effort should be made by Governments which have not already done so to ratify all existing international instruments relating to women's rights during the Year, and to implement fully their provisions.

IV. ACTIVITIES AT THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

28. Proclamations and/or statements inaugurating the Year should be issued (*a*) by the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the specialized agencies; (*b*) by the resident representatives of UNDP; (*c*) by executive heads of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

29. As a focal point of the international observance of the Year, an international conference should be organized.

30. An appeal should be made to Governments of countries in the different regions to establish regional commissions on the status of women and to organize within existing intergovernmental and other similar organizations, programmes for women aimed at their full integration in national and regional development which would:

(*a*) Place special emphasis on relieving the burdens and increasing the economic output of rural women engaged in agriculture, on providing facilities for food preservation and processing, child care and also on providing co-operative education;

(*b*) Co-operate with interested United Nations bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, particularly with the Commission on the Status of Women;

(*c*) Provide in industrialized areas advice and services aimed at improving working conditions, family life and participation in all aspects of regional development.

31. Regional meetings could be organized by the United Nations and the specialized agencies, wherever possible in conjunction with the regional economic commissions.

32. A question entitled "Status and role of women in society, with special reference to the need to achieve equal rights for women and to women's contribution to the attainment of the goals of the Second United Nations Development Decade, to the struggle against colonialism, racism and racial discrimination and to the strengthening of international peace and of co-operation between States" should be included in the agenda of the thirtieth session of the General Assembly. Items relating to the three main objectives of the Year should be included in the agenda of the general conferences, assemblies or similar meetings of the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies.

33. All organs responsible for the mid-term review and appraisal of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade, which is to take place in 1975 should be requested to pay special attention to the integration of women in the total development effort.

34. The regional intergovernmental organizations and regional intergovernmental commissions should consider the possibility of establishing appropriate programmes designed to promote the achievement of equality of men and women and the integration of women in development (the action taken by the Economic Commission for Africa might provide an example useful for other regions).

35. Every effort should be made to further during the Year the elaboration of a new international convention dealing with the elimination of discrimination against women.

36. To undertake all necessary measures to adopt a declaration on protection of women and children in emergency and armed conflict in the struggle for peace, self-determination, national liberation and independence.

37. Publicity and educational measures, studies and surveys, conferences and other meetings and exchange programmes similar to those proposed on the national level could be developed regionally and internationally.

38. The United Nations Office of Public Information should produce material about the life and problems of women in developing countries to be used for information in the developed countries and about the ways and means of action, which have proved to be useful in promoting the status of women.

39. Particular attention should be given to:

(*a*) The issue of an international symbol for the Year;

(*b*) Preparation in advance of the Year of pamphlets, posters and publications;

(*c*) Issuance of a United Nations stamp, first-day cover and cancellations;

(*d*) Radio and television programmes given simultaneously in the capitals of Member States;

(*e*) Films and film festivals;

(*f*) International exhibitions featuring artistic and cultural works especially by women;

(*g*) International awards honouring achievements by women in specific fields;

(*h*) Mass distribution in all available languages through the United Nations Information Centres of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and related international instruments.

Secretariats of the United Nations System

40. Organizations in the United Nations system should set an example by: (*a*) eliminating from their own staff regulations and administrative procedures any provisions or practices which may be discriminatory against women; (*b*) organizing more extensive training and refresher courses for staff members; (*c*) associating interested staff members in the implementation of the International Women's Year programmes; and (*d*) preparing a report for consideration by Governments on what has been done by the United Nations Secretariat and the specialized agencies to improve the status of women since the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1946.

41. Every effort should be made to render assistance and give support at the regional and international levels to national programmes and activities organized as part of the observance of the Year.

42. A report should be prepared for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women describing and evaluating activities undertaken during the Year by Governments, United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

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